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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1372  
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 2741  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA PRIORITY  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS RIYADH 001045

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP (BERNDT) AND OES/IHB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ECON PGOV PREL TBIO KFLU CASC ASEC SA  
SUBJECT: HEALTH MINISTER REQUESTS HHS MOU BY OCTOBER

REF: RIYADH 975

¶1. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 5.

¶2. (SBU) In a meeting with A/DCM and a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) training delegation on August 11, Health Minister Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah said his Ministry ideally would like to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cooperation in the areas of health reform, training, and research with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by early October (reftel). Rabeeah emphasized his desire to conclude the agreement after Ramadan but well in advance of the Hajj pilgrimage. Separately, the Minister said he will likely travel to the U.S. in late September.

¶3. (SBU) Rabeeah and Deputy Minister of Health Ziad Memish expressed a strong desire to enhance collaboration with the CDC, as well as the Navy Medical Research Unit 3 (NAMRU3) based in Cairo, in the immediate and long term. Memish said the Ministry desperately needed trained epidemiologists and half-jokingly requested "unlimited support" from the U.S. through programs like the Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP). Dr. Tadesse Wuhib, the head of the CDC delegation, recommended posting Dr. Ahmed Baghal in Jeddah to bolster Saudi efforts to fight H1N1 during the Hajj. Rabeeah expressed eagerness to have Dr. Baghal, an American of Syrian decent who is a Muslim and native Arabic speaker, posted in the Kingdom in the months leading up to the Hajj.

COMMENT

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¶4. (SBU) Post fully supports the idea of a HHS MOU with the Ministry and appreciates all efforts by the Department in cooperation with HHS to conclude the agreement by the fall, potentially for signature when Rabeeah visits the United States in September. Post supports Dr. Baghal's proposed TDY in principle. End comment.

¶5. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Post requests NEA/ARP engage OES/IHB and HHS to acquire a model MOU that we can share with the Saudi Ministry of Health, as part of Embassy's response to the July 12 letter of Health Minister Rabeeah to Charge (reftel).

ERDMAN